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# Governor's Message.

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INAUGURAL MESSAGE  
OF  
WILLIAM H. BISSELL,  
GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS

TO THE

Twentieth General Assembly,

JANUARY 12, 1857.

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Springfield, Illinois :

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1857.



# MESSAGE.

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*General Assembly of the State of Illinois:*

The relation which the people of the State have established between you and me, makes it my duty, from time to time, to give you information of the state of the Government and recommend to your consideration such measures as I may deem expedient.

A very able and elaborate Message of my distinguished predecessor, delivered to you at the commencement of your present session, relieved me of the necessity of saying much that otherwise might have found it innumeration upon me to lay before you. With the suggestions and recommendations contained in that Message, I fully concur.

The general prosperity of our State, at the present time, should elicit our warmest gratitude toward the Great Author of all our blessings. Good health, peace and unexampled prosperity prevail throughout our borders—and every legitimate branch of business is prosecuted with a success hitherto scarcely dreamed of. Agriculture may be regarded as the foundation of all our prosperity. No State in the Union, no country on the globe is more favored by nature for the successful pursuit of Agriculture than Illinois. Agriculture, however, like most of our other interests, requires, at the present, for its successful and complete development, the fostering care of the Government; and I recommend an appropriation of reasonable amount for the purpose of aiding the efforts

that are being made by the State Agricultural Society (whose efforts in this cause have been thus far, both enlightened and successful,) to advance that vital interest. The Report of that Society, which will shortly be laid before you, points out the mode in which the interference of the State will be most productive of good.

It is a matter of very sincere gratification, that those Institutions of charity—the Hospital for the Insane, the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, and the School for the Blind—which have heretofore received the fostering care of the State, are more than equaling our warmest anticipations. I cheerfully recommend the very reasonable appropriations asked for each of them. And, as kindred to this, I would call your attention to the subject of establishing a School for the Instruction of Idiots. Ample experience in other States has established the gratifying fact, that a portion, at least, of this most unfortunate class of our citizens, are susceptible of improvement by suitable training and teaching, such as may be afforded them at proper institutions. I know of no object to which the funds of our Treasury could be more properly applied than to the elevation of this class of our citizens. It will gratify me much if the Legislature, in its wisdom, shall take the same view of this subject which I do, and vote the necessary funds for establishing an Institution for the Instruction of Idiots.

It is my duty, also, to call your attention to the subject of the erection of a new Penitentiary. Our present one is known to be already burthened with more inmates than can well be accommodated, for want of room. Another Penitentiary located some where in the northern part of the State seems to be desired by our people; and I hope you will find it consistent with your sense of duty to provide for its erection.

Application will be made to you for aid in behalf of schools for the reform of juvenile delinquents. The practice of punishing offences committed by youths of tender age in the same manner as if committed by adults, is unquestionably evil in all its tendencies. Boys whose minds and characters are yet unformed, are thrown into jails with old and hardened offenders from whom they receive lessons in villainy and crime which qualify them for becoming adroit and confirmed criminals, when again let loose upon society. Whereas, if these youths were placed at an institution admitting none but juveniles, under the care and supervision of judicious teachers, and there taught, not only the ordinary branches of education, but those principles which lie at the foundation of all excellence in character, they might be reclaimed of their vicious habits and restored to society, prepared to become its ornaments and support. I commend this subject to your attentive consideration.

Our Common School Law, though established on a correct basis, is yet found in some of its details, embarrassing and almost impracticable. It requires careful revision, and I refer you to the very excellent and extended Report of the late Superintendent of Schools for the particulars in which it is deemed defective, in the hope that you will be able so to amend it as to remove all difficulty connected with its successful administration.

Our present system of Banking Laws operates as well, perhaps, as we had any reason to anticipate, yet it has hardly been tested sufficiently to authorize a decided opinion as to what its effect may be upon the business of our people in times of general pecuniary embarrassment and distress. I would suggest such amendment of those laws as experience may have shown to be necessary for the safety of bill holders, but without any material increase of the powers of Banking Corporations.

The inhabitants of our State were, in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, enumerated in the year 1855. It will therefore,

devolve upon you to form new Senate Representative Districts, so as to give equal portions of our State, their just share in the legislation of the country. A proper regard to the rights of the people, as well as the principle of equal representation, which lies at the basis of all our republican institutions, itself dictate the necessity of so adjusting from time to time, the representation of counties, as to prevent the great inequality which arises so often in a country augmenting in population so rapidly as ours. The framers of the Constitution, acting upon the just and sound principle of equal representation, have provided that the Legislature shall, at its next session after an enumeration has taken place, apportion the State into new districts, performing this imperative duty, it may be to consider whether the very large increase in population in our State since the Constitution was adopted, amounting to more than a million of people, does not require an increase of the number of Representatives, as provided by the Constitution. I would recommend an increase, as not only dictated by considerations of convenience, but, also, as a matter of popular rights.

The Illinois Central Railroad Company, having obtained for the purpose of the construction of that road, the large body of land granted to the State by the General Government, and in return undertaken certain obligations toward the State and the people, claims for that reason, the particular attention of our Legislative and Executive Departments. The terms in which my distinguished predecessor has spoken of this enterprise, are, in my opinion, well deserved. I believe the work which has been accomplished will stand unrivalled, even in this country, proverbially renowned for its gigantic undertakings. It is a proud monument of the skill, sagacity and enlightenment of those who conceived and have thus far carried it. The pecuniary benefits to our Treasury arising from the arrangement between the State and the Company, are unmistakably great, promising as they do at no distant day entirely to relieve our citizens of taxation for State purposes. But the beneficial effect of this great enterprise, upon the business of the people at large, and more particularly that of them in Southern Illinois, who have hitherto labored under such serious difficulties in reference to markets, and commercial course, but who will soon rival in all the



greatness, their hitherto more favored citizens,—are almost incalculable. I have the confidence that you will extend every possible facility to this Company in the prosecution of its enterprise—while at the same time guard with utmost caution the rights of the Territory on this behalf.

But reasonable, perhaps, that I should avail myself of the opportunity of distinguishing certain individuals who were prominent in the inception of this great enterprise. It is Ketchum, George Griswold, David E. and Jonathan Sturges are we mainly indebted for the successful carrying out of this project, Mr. Ketchum especially, was as active as efficient in organizing the Company in devising ways and means for the prosecution of the work. In these things he was aided by the other gentlemen named. On more than one occasion, when the prospects of the enterprise were shrouded in gloom and doubt, and when nothing but the most bold and adventurous policy could have saved it, these gentlemen risked their own private means to an extent which, had the enterprise failed, would have involved, some of them at least, in irreparable ruin. I take pleasure, therefore, in mentioning these gentlemen before the State in the manner which I know is proper to them, that our future, may never forget to whom they are justly indebted for the great work of the Pacific Railroad.

Reflecting upon the various causes of our unparalleled prosperity as a State, we never to forget that a highly intelligent and industrious emigration has materially aided us in successfully developing the rich resources of our soil, and building up our cities and villages. The spirit of our National and State institutions, and the wholesome laws enacted by the early sages of our history, extend to emigrate us, after a residence of reasonable time in the Territory, most important rights of full citizenship. We have a firm belief that the wise policy of our statesmen is not only just in itself, but is admirably adapted to inspire the settlers from the distant lands with attachment to our common country and its benign institutions, and to extinguish amongst them feelings of prejudice and hostile nationality, I congratulate my fellow citizens, so large a portion of whom have come from distant lands, upon the returning spirit of harmony and kindness, between all classes of men, which but recently seemed, from a com-

bination of causes, threatened with permanent disturbance.

The question of the extension of slavery into our new national Territory, although not forming any part of State politics, was nevertheless so prominent a feature in the late canvass, as to create the expectation, perhaps, that I should, on this occasion, say something concerning it.

Up to the time of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, I had ever considered the existence of slavery within the United States as an *anomaly* in our republican system, tolerated by a *necessity* springing from the actual presence of the institution among us when our Constitution was adopted.

The provisions in the Constitution for a slave bases of representation, and for the reclamation of fugitives from labor, I had supposed, and still suppose, were admitted there upon that necessity. And that such were also the views of a vast majority of the American people both North and South, I had, until the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, never doubted.

But the introduction, progress and passage of that measure, together with the course of argument made to sustain it, forced me reluctantly to the conclusion that, if finally successful, slavery is no longer to be considered or treated as anomalous in our system, but is rather, thenceforward, to be a leading and favorite element of society, to be politically recognised as such, and to which all else must bend and conform. This conclusion is strengthened, not a little, by the subsequent administration of the measure, in the same hands which originated and matured it. Considering that we are an intelligent people, living in an enlightened age, and professing the peaceful doctrines of Christianity, and a love of liberty above all things earthly, it may well be doubted whether, when the world's history shall have been written to its close, it will contain a more extraordinary page than that which shall record the history of Kansas in 1855 and 1856.

Forced to the conclusion stated, a large portion of our fellow-citizens, myself among them, have resisted the consummation as we best could; and believing that not the fate of the negro alone, but the liberties of the white man—of all men, are involved in the issue, we shall continue to resist according to our best ability.

In doing this we shall ever be careful neither to forget nor disregard the value of the Union,

the obligations of the Constitution, nor even the courtesies due our brethren of the South.

Our present revenue is ample for all our purposes. It is fair to presume, that, with reasonably economical management on the part of the officers of our State, we shall forever, hereafter, escape the imputation of delinquency in the payment of our debts. I recommend urgently upon you the most rigid economy, in which, be assured, you shall have my most cheerful aid and support. By such means we shall, in a very few years, have extinguished our State debt, when Illinois will stand before the world in a most enviable attitude. To accomplish this, it is but necessary that we pursue the system so happily inaugurated by my immediate predecessor—ever bearing in mind that economy is the true secret of national as well as individual prosperity.

Called to the Executive Chair without any desire on my part for such a position of responsibility, I assume the duties with confidence, not in any ability of my own, but in the knowledge that I shall be assisted by the counsels of

good men, experienced in the affairs, and by the cheerful and hearty coöperation of the whole people, in all laudable effort to develop her material wealth and advance civilization. If a kind Providence shall spare me, I shall hope to retire from the carrying with me the consciousness of having contributed, as far as was in my power, to the development of the wealth, and the high and social position of our noble State.

That our high hopes and expectations regarding the future greatness of our State be fully realized, let us work for its construction, with that harmony and mutual good-will which insure success—trusting to the over-ruling, but always kind, Providence smile upon our efforts, and bless us with peace and prosperity, and a continuance to ourselves and our posterity, of the blessings of constitutional liberty.

WM. H. BISSE

